

## **MARKETING OF AN ELECTRONIC ATLAS - THE EXPO ATLAS OF PEST COUNTY**

**Zsolt Török**

### **Introduction**

The appearance of electronic atlases in cartography represents a new trend in the development of the discipline. This new medium raises several practical questions that should be dealt with; challenging issues relating to the conceptual basis should be tackled as well. Despite the extending field of professional interest, relatively little attention has been drawn to the marketing side, which is of vital importance in the case of a new product. This paper is a report on the marketing of a mapping project, the EXPO Atlas of Pest County.

### **Maps and the 1996 Budapest World Expo**

In 1996 a special World Exposition will be held in Budapest, Hungary. This unique opportunity of history offers great prospects for cartography. The increasing demand for new and reliable maps has been experienced in Eastern Europe, where cartographic products for the public were of rather inferior quality. Moreover, security issues restricted their content and accuracy to a great extent. Today the situation has changed and the need for various cartographic products represent the customers' side in a budding market economy. However the past decades had a very sad effect on the nation's cartographic culture.

Millions of people are expected to visit the 1996 EXPO, that will be located in the capital of Hungary, in Budapest. The core area of the exposition is the Southern part of the city, at the Danube river.

Pest County is one of the largest units in the Hungarian administrative system, which is situated in the middle of the country. Actually, the capital is in fact the main city of this county, although, they are independent of each other at the regional level. Pest County is the central industrial area of the country, the largest agglomeration belt around Budapest, and the most densely populated region with all the problems these induce. On the other hand, one of the most frequently visited tourist areas can also be found in the county, the famous Danube Bend in the Northern part. To the South from the capital at the edge of the Great Hungarian Plain, the Bugac National Park, with the traditional attractions of its cultural and natural heritage, is still within Pest County as well. In addition to the special places of interest, from the EXPO's point of view this region is the most important service and production supplier. The overcrowded capital will not be able to offer accommodation for the visitors in its luxurious hotels, so many of them will look for other opportunities within commuting distance from Budapest. They will be strangers, and, consequently, they will be in instant need of maps, that will help them in the orientation. Most of the foreign visitors will not be able to communicate in Hungarian, but they will understand the international graphic language of maps. At the same time, many of the Hungarians visiting the Expo will need maps, too.

In other words, the World Expo is an unique opportunity to create new maps, perhaps in new electronic formats, to display spatial data for different purposes. In this respect the

Expo is but the opportunity, while the aim is the continuous development of the mapping system and products in Hungary.

## **The EXPO Atlas Project**

### **The concept:**

The idea, that an atlas should be produced for the Expo was supported by the Department of Environmental Protection and Land Development of Pest County, and it was worked out into a project proposal by the Department of Cartography, Eötvös University.

The atlas' concept is based on the aforementioned considerations. The aim of the Expo Atlas of Pest County is to create a systematic collection of geographic information in the form of maps to meet especially the following requirements:

- display general and tourist information of the county's natural and cultural resources,
- serve orientation purposes
- develop local spatial awareness, patriotism
- uniformity, flexibility,

The series of the settlements' maps would in fact cover the whole country. Following the principle of "one page- one settlement", the separate maps are made at a uniform scale. In the case of the towns the central area is represented at a larger scale. In addition to the main map, two representation would depict on each sheet the geographic position of the settlement in the county and its local environment. They give a broader context to the main map and help the map user. For the place of the maps and the other textual and pictorial or graphic elements, a graphic system was worked out.

### **Products:**

The atlas is the collection of the maps of the settlements, that are published separately with the same content, but according to the local requirements. By placing advertisements along the maps' margins, they serve as promotional material. Magnifying the maps we produce large size poster maps, that can be displayed at public places. The variation of the products lends great flexibility to the project, and make them cheaper in this combination.

### **Data and information:**

Data acquisition is done at local and regional level. The Departments of the county provide the Department of Cartography with the relevant cartographic and statistic data, especially in the case of the thematic maps of the county. Information collecting at the local level is of vital importance at the maps of the separate settlements in particular, because there is no other way to get reliable and up to date information. Local governments should provide data and information for the basis of their own maps. Local residents and schoolchildren, upper grades mainly, contribute by collecting important local information and by representing it in graphic form (that is sketches). This participation would enhance the maps' utility, and, at the same time, would develop the geographical awareness of the inhabitants.

### **Map production:**

The data and information collected would allow the Department of Cartography to produce the thematic maps and those of every settlement, that is the maps of the 186 towns and villages in Pest County. This is a huge amount of work, in order to complete the atlas, a new map sheet must be made every third day. The enormous quantity of maps can be produced by using digital technology instead of the traditional map making process.

In the first phase of the project, all the settlement maps should be produced in two years' time. The whole atlas, consisting of as many as 200 map sheets should be finished by the year before the World Expo, i.e. by 1995. In the first edition of the atlas all the maps would be published, while in the year of the Expo, only those sheets would be published in the second edition, that required revision in the form of separate map sheets.

The calculated cost of the project would exceed 40 million Hungarian forints. However, the largest part of this enormous sum of money would be spent on printing and different technical phases of the production, that would make up 3/4 of the project's budget.

### **Atlas in electronic form:**

The high cost of traditional map production, together with the consideration of new alternatives offered by the new media led to the idea of the electronic atlas. The map users are expected to use this atlas when spatial problems at regional level are taken into account. On the other hand, most types of local uses require a hard-copy map. The electronic atlas is a relatively inexpensive alternative to the traditional printed maps and the project's financial resources were limited. In the end we suggested an integrative solution: while the atlas of the county should be produced in electronic format, the maps of the settlements should be printed to the order of local governments by desktop mapping system, using the atlas' cartographic data base. In this way local financial resources can be used, and the project can become profitable for the county.

At this point of the project we realized the indispensable necessity of marketing and we worked out a marketing strategy.

### **The marketing situation**

Commercial cartography has a long history, and whenever maps should be sold in the market, issues of marketing should be taken into account. For us, as a university department, it was a new situation that was not met before, when we were expected to elaborate the project and to sell it as a product.

Basically, this situation is the result of the dramatic change of the economic and political system in Hungary in the past few years. In contrast to the former structure, now local governments are independent and have got separate budgets. The county's departments' could not finance our project, which is well beyond their capacity. Although a project of regional importance, the only way for us to raise money was the marketing of the project at the local governments. This involved a special market where costumers were politicians in charge of the project. At the same time they represented the wide range of possible costumers and users of the real products of the project. Paradoxically enough, we had to convince them, that the project serves their interests. The special target market, that is the leaders of the local governing bodies, consisted of people with little or no cartographic knowledge. From personal communications it turned out that their concept of cartography



was based on the products of traditional cartography, because they were confronted with them in the classrooms. We had to communicate the project to this cartographically untrained group of adult people to make them able to make a decision. As politicians of a new democratic system they would resist and refuse any project that originated in the regional administration. They are very sensitive if their competence is in question. When marketing the atlas project we tried to avoid all these dangers. Last October a special EXPO assembly was held in Budapest, where the Expo projects had the opportunity to introduce themselves.

### **Multimedia as marketing media**

Considering the situation we decided to give some visual reinforcement to my oral presentation during this introduction. There is no point in only talking about maps that the other people do not know at all. We wanted to explain and demonstrate our ideas.

In the case of this electronic atlas it was a natural choice when we made use of the new information technology and created a multimedia application for the marketing of the atlas of similar nature.

Multimedia means the integrated use of different media in a functional unity. Our video presentation of the Expo atlas was actually a multimedia presentation, that combined various media like video, computer, graphic and text.

The short time did not allow us to write a scenario, although we discussed the basic ideas that should organize the film into a complete story as follows:

- The geographical location of the 1996 Budapest World Exposition. Zoom effect: World-Europe-Hungary-Pest county.
- The Department of Cartography, Eötvös University, as the place for cartographic education and research.
- The atlas concept. A step by step explanation with a flow chart.
- The actual phases of the work from data collection to the final products with special emphasis on digital technology.
- The local map sheets on a sample map of the Expo-village, that refers to another project.

The advantages of the new technology are demonstrated on concrete examples like map revision and combination.

The film was shot by the University's own Video Studio, who also supplied the other visual material from their archives. We actually did not use computer animation, but the image generation on the screen took so much time that it looked like a kind of roll down animation. The text on the screen consisted of short sentences and simple words, but a more informative narration completed this by using the audio media. The voice of the narrator is well known from TV in Hungary, that suggested the idea that the film is a professional product, as it was. We choose a suitable background music that also hints to the high-tech environment.

The video presentation is less than seven minutes long, which is considered to be ideal for this kind of promotional films.

### **Conclusions**

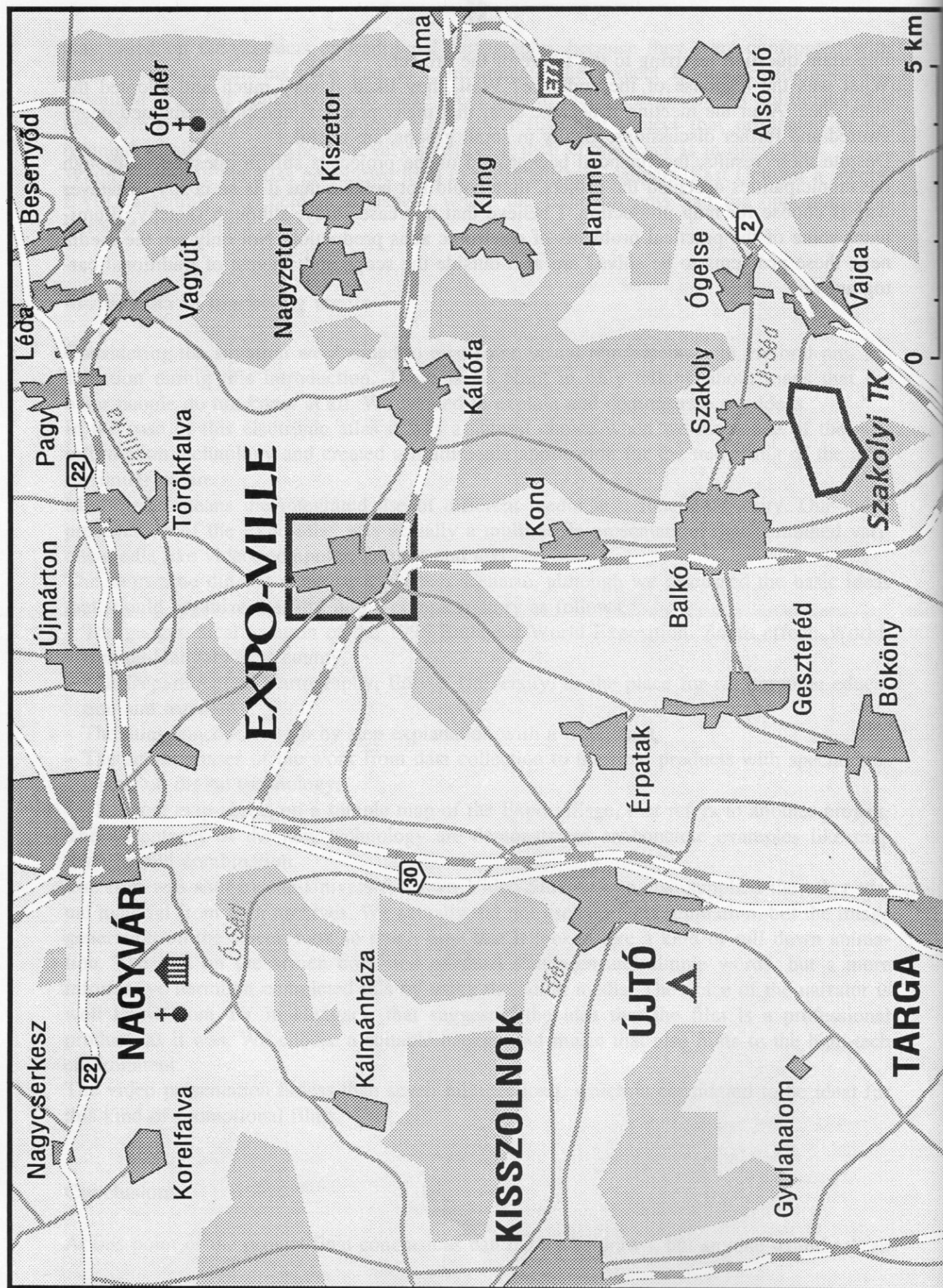
At this point of the project final conclusions can hardly be drawn, but anyone would ask an

important question referring to the future of the project.

What was the response of the audience? Well, they liked it very much and adopted the atlas' idea. After the meeting it became clear that many practical questions remained unanswered and further discussions, ideally in small groups, are useful.

Despite these results, the financial background of the project is still in question. Although the municipalities accepted the project, they could not believe that it is so costly, whatever way is chosen for map production. I believe that this case study, although sketchy, illuminates some of the practical problems of electronic atlas production. Not only are the media new, these problems to be solved are also outside the scope and interest of traditional cartography.







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